

Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the Contemporary Past. Susan Bennett. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

To say that Susan Bennett merely extends the questions that prevalent scholarship asks about contemporary culture's obsession with re-presenting the past is to neglect the keen conceptual *shifts* that her new book performs. Her opening chapter reveals more than a bid to contest standard definitions of nostalgia as a longing for the mythical past, as a desire to keep things intact. Rather, "New Way To Play Old Texts" refigures this conservative praxis of longing as radically linked to political change. Nostalgia becomes "the inflicted territory where claims for authenticity (and this is a displacement of the articulation of power) are staged" (7). This term provides the pivotal ground for Bennett's exploration of "how *particular* vested interests project their desires for the present through a multiplicity of representations" (3) of Renaissance texts.

To reconceptualize how Shakespeare's authority both figures and fails to appear in modern experience, *Performing Nostalgia* unsettles the power that literary culture ascribes to the written word. Rather than concede the corpus of Shakespeare's plays as the key to interpreting the disparate 'anxieties of influence' that we presently discern, Bennett insists that the collisions between genre, gender, race and nation which incite debate among scholars have generative counterparts in contemporary performance. Aptly titled "Proliferation and Performance," her second chapter aligns historical power with the realm of corporeal ritual; it surveys a decade of those "verbal and gestural repetitions which activate remembering" (9). Specifically, this chapter traces the production methodologies and reception economies of twelve different stagings of *King Lear* that occurred in Britain between 1980 and 1990.

Initially, Bennett probes the possibility of (dis)articulating *Lear's* overarching 'greatness' within the parameters of Shakespeare's nation, public television and mainstream (commercial) theatre. Within the bounds of the Royal National Theatre, the Renaissance Theatre Company, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Old Vic and the BBC, she attends to specific combinations of directors and performers that "suggest the potential for an innovative and perhaps radical reading of this canonical text" (40). Yet despite her faith in the revolutionary power of performance, Bennett's archival research reveals that London's leading theatre critics saw the decade of 'innovation' as "something rather less new" (40). Starkly to undermine the hope of doing anything invigorating with this particular text, Bennett quotes John Field, a British teacher and director of Shakespeare; when asked by *The Independent* newspaper what he wishes for Shakespeare's birthday commemoration in 1991, Field declares "a ban on productions of *King Lear* for three years" (47).

While this horizon is far from enabling, *Performing Nostalgia* does not forsake *King Lear* as “a visible and thus significant site for the contestation of cultural power” (48). Consistently cutting-edge in terms of the topographies it surveys, this valuable work looks beyond the mainstream theatres and beyond theatre itself to those other sites where revitalizations of the present by way of the Shakespearean past can and do occur. One fascinating example is Bennett’s account of the public works company Welfare State and its seven-year residency in the northern English town of Barrow-in-Furness. We learn that the town’s single employer, Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering, produces nuclear submarines. It is precisely at this improbable locus that Welfare State initiates a site-specific performance and filming; since the idea is to create work with and for the local population, the immediate economic geography shapes the project’s concerns. Significantly, Welfare State facilitates the community’s political (oppositional) engagement through its collaboration on a nuclear age *Lear*. Here, as in her analysis of Barrie Keefe’s racially and socio-economically inflected *King of England* and in her reading of Women’s Theatre Group’s *Lear’s Daughters*, Bennett foregrounds the prospect of micropolitical change. At particular sites of proliferation, the act of revision “takes up the global awareness of Shakespeare’s plays and resituates it in the specific experience of a community audience” (55). And, as *Performing Nostalgia* demonstrates, it is through a production’s refashioned focus on the possibility of dialogue with its target audience that the point of proliferation shifts from “what have we done to Shakespeare’s play” to “how can this material be useful to us?” (56).

The book’s final chapters shift Shakespeare out of straightforward performance studies to address more disturbing sources of influence in the context of current debates on popular culture and post-colonialism. “Not-Shakespeare, Our Contemporary” probes the discord between the idealized authority of Shakespeare’s texts and those other, less than perfect Jacobean city comedies and revenge plots that we use to legitimize our defective present tense. While clearly troubled by restagings that locate their effect as “a surfeit of images, rather than articulating any content or analysis of those images” (84), Bennett reads hauntings such as David Lynch’s *Wild at Heart* and *Blue Velvet* as more than sites of gratuitous violence and conspicuous consumption. She negotiates their too-evident purchase on Jacobean corruption and apathy alongside “texts that follow precisely the activity of radical reading that might *defamiliarize* our own desires and dissatisfactions in the present” (94). To close this insightful reappraisal of the past in performance, “The Post-Colonial Body” reconsiders the competing anti-colonial uses to which Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* might yet be put. Complicating the last hundred and fifty years of Caliban’s proliferation as “an Australian aboriginal, an American Indian, a West Indian, an African, a Boer, a

'red republican,' a 'missing link,' a 'Hun,' and an Irishman" (124), Bennett both underscores and problematizes Howard Felprin's assertion that "the one oppressed group to whom Caliban has not yet been assimilated is that of women—an idea whose time might have come, and (let us hope) gone" (125). Profoundly mindful of the multiple, conflicted political investments that subjects of the present make in enacting the past, *Performing Nostalgia* speaks across the gaps that persist in our post-modern tense. From literature to theatre, from theory to practice, this book is urgent, provocative and relentlessly hopeful reading for students, scholars and performers alike.

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Acting Between the Lines: The Field Day Theatre Company and Irish Cultural Politics 1980-1984. Marilyn J. Richtarik. Oxford English Monographs. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. vii + 356. ISBN 0-10-818247-3.

In what the book jacket rightly proclaims as "the first full-length study" of "one of the most important elements in contemporary Irish culture," Marilyn J. Richtarik has done encyclopedic research, made sense of seemingly contradictory evidence, negotiated the minefield of Northern Irish politics, and provided cogent commentaries on several of the most important plays to come out of Ireland in the last generation. But this book is both less and more than one might hope: less because of its rather arbitrary endpoint of 1984, more because of its tendency to give ten examples when two would do, and to overwhelm with background information (*e.g.* over 24 pages of what Brian Friel, Seamus Deane and Seamus Heaney had done prior to the founding of Field Day). There are several moments when the reader wonders whether Richtarik is rather more interested in documentation than in explication.

Certainly this study has much to recommend it. A short introduction is especially useful for its delineation of local and regional newspapers into four schema: unionist, nationalist, Protestant and Catholic. Indeed, one of the book's strengths throughout is its refusal to equate "unionist" with "Protestant" or "nationalist" with "Catholic," an especially important distinction since three of the company's original six Directors are Protestant nationalists. Another excellent chapter centers on the city of Derry (or Londonderry) and its particular relationship to the Field Day company. Particularly significant here is the

company's ability, early on, to coalesce the city's various religious and political factions behind a single project. As a cultural enterprise, Field Day became a source of civic pride, providing at least some salve for the wounds associated with a much-anticipated but never-created university in the city.

Not surprisingly, the longest discussion of a single Field Day production centers on Friel's *Translations*, the first (and still, arguably, best) play presented by the company. While Richtarik adds few insights to the fairly substantial body of critical material on this play (and in fact leaps to some rather hasty conclusions), her juxtaposition of , and commentary on, production reviews from Derry, Belfast, Dublin, London, and provincial newspapers is illuminating. Indeed, the sheer quantity of such sources consulted, evidence by the nearly 200 listings of anonymous articles included in the 37-page bibliography, suggests that this book has considerable merit as a handbook, and will no doubt become invaluable in this capacity for scholars interested in the Field Day's early years.

Richtarik's discussion of the company's decision not to produce David Rudkin's *The Saxon Shore*, the first play actually commissioned by Field Day, is equally illuminating, especially in that it dispels in the reader's mind the nagging belief that the author might be unable or unwilling to differentiate between actions and intended actions. Clearly, Richtarik is generally sympathetic to the goals of the company, but she is also willing to point out the crises of logic and/or communication which led to a political and logistical embarrassment for Field Day. A similar demonstration of the ability to be simultaneously sympathetic and critical comes in her discussion of the tension between the "explicitly political" pamphlets published under the company's aegis and the purported theatrical intention of "trying to build a body of work removed from political action" (245).

Some of the critical commentary, to be sure, borders on the absurd: the closing moments of *The Three Sisters*, for example, are no more "triumphant" (119) in Friel's version than in Chekhov's. But there are also moments of penetrating common sense and a good deal of wit: a metaphorically raised eyebrow at "the dubious implication that literary theory conditions the way most people look at the world" (153-54), a citation of Damian Gorman's comment that Field Day's colors are "pink and pastel green—those of the armchair leftie and 'no bombs' nationalist" (189), a passing reference to the perception of early Field Day tours as "Friels on Wheels" (192), a suggestion that the over-4000-page Field Day anthology might be employed as "a decoration for particularly sturdy coffee-tables" (263).

For all its strengths, however, this book is frustrating in its hasty and unmotivated cessation at 1984. Richtarik's points that "[b]y 1985 Field Day was no longer a daring and precarious experiment but an established part of the Irish cultural landscape" (239), and that the five years she considers "established

features of and contradictions within the company that would continue to be prominent in future years" (256) are no doubt true. Still, they do little to change the impression that this book simply stops. The "Postscript" chapter actually compounds this effect by shifting all emphasis away from the company's theatrical activity in the years after 1984 and onto the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. Certainly the anthology is a major work, and may ultimately be regarded as the company's greatest achievement. Still, in leaping forward to 1991 (the anthology's publication date), Richtarik actually calls attention to what she does not discuss: including, for example, the production of Heaney's *The Cure at Troy* (an event of significance if only for the literary stature of the playwright) and the tension created by Friel's offering *Dancing at Lughnasa* to the Abbey Theatre in Dublin rather than to Field Day. The inevitable discussion of the controversy generated by the anthology's omission of female authors, a significant enough imbroglio to occasion the publication of a follow-up volume dedicated to women writers, also reminds us that Field Day has never had a woman Director, nor performed a play by a female dramatist. It also highlights the irony that the present study should be written by a woman.

Given its stated parameters, this is an excellent book: a bibliographic treasure-trove, with some solid criticism and the occasional flash of real insight. But one cannot help but wish that there were half as much documentation of twice as much material, and that the ratio of synthesis to citation were much higher than it is.

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The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre. Editor: John Russell Brown. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. ISBN 0-19-212997-X. \$45.00.

This elegantly written, superbly illustrated (with both color and black-and-white plates) volume is likely to provide the first significant breach in Oscar Brockett's long dominance in the area of theatre history texts aimed at college students. Under John Russell Brown's editorship, sixteen distinguished international scholars construct remarkably compact but thorough histories of numerous stage eras. These include not only the usual western theatre categories from the Greeks to the present, but also broader multicultural views that include Asian and African dramatic art, gender-bending movements, and a particular emphasis throughout on the social and political ramifications of the drama.

Among the most outstanding chapters are those that extend the volume to provide views of cultures and theatre forms often excluded or marginalized in previous theatre history texts of this kind. Leslie Du S. Read's "Beginnings of Theatre in Africa and the Americas" scurries through dramatic movements from ancient Egypt to the native Americas with insight and thoroughness, despite the difficulty of reconstructing some of the activities she explores. In this chapter, the illustrations provided are especially valuable in supporting Read's text, although this is generally the case throughout the entire volume. Three contributors tackle the Oriental theatres: Farley Richmond surveys the South Asian region, Colin Mackerras covers East Asian stages, and Leon Rubin explores South-East Asian Theatres. In each instance, the contributors provide clarity to very complicated modes of performance, making these profoundly abstract forms vivid to those relatively unfamiliar with either the Orient or ritualized theatrical styles. Other contributors include Oliver Taplin ("Greek Theatre"), David Wiles ("Theatre in Roman and Christian Europe"), Peter Thomson ("English Renaissance and Restoration Theatre"), William D. Howarth ("French Renaissance and Neo-Classical Theatre"), Peter Holland and Michael Patterson ("Eighteenth-Century Theatre"), Michael R. Booth ("Nineteenth-Century Theatre"), Martin Esslin ("Modern Theatre: 1890-1920"), Christopher Innes ("Theatre after Two World Wars"), and editor Brown, who provides an excellent introduction as well as the book's final section, "Theatre Since 1970."

The volume features over three-hundred superb illustrations, many in color, and is otherwise lavish in its presentation. Surprisingly, it is a modestly priced book for all of its splendor of presentation—Brockett's *History of the Theatre*, now in its seventh edition, is not nearly as impressively mounted, but costs considerably more.

Featuring astute scholarship, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre* manages to stress vital developments in each era and culture without burdening the reader with the kinds of excessive detail that typically send undergraduates into deep panic at the thought of taking theatre history courses. Theatre history instructors may well opt to supplement this volume with supporting texts and plays, but it clearly offers more than most texts in guiding the reader through the great movements, writers, and practitioners of the stage throughout the centuries and across all cultures in which some form of dramatic art influenced its society. That it does so without burdening the reader with pedantic detail or dry prose is its most valuable quality.

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One Night Stands: A Critic's View of Modern British Theatre. Michael Billington. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995; xv + 382 pp. ISBN 0-435-08644-8. \$15.95 (pb).

In considerations of theatre criticism, academics often see scholarly criticism as more worthwhile and profound than newspaper reviewing, in that criticism relies less on hasty impression in the immediate context of consumerism and more on thoughtful reconsideration of the theatrical event in historical and social context. So it sometimes takes a daily drama critic such as Michael Billington of *The Guardian* of Manchester, England—and a book such as *One Night Stands*—to reintroduce benefits and, indeed, joys of well-versed, highly knowledgeable, long-term newspaper reviewing. And *One Night Stands* also achieves other goals. It revives the valuable tradition of publishing collections of reviews. It provides us with a history-in-the-making of a critical period in English theatre, placed in the larger perspective of world theatre but never neglecting national and civic theatrical concerns. And it gives us the chance to read the writings of a critic, both earnest and humorous, which reflect a definite and admirable set of critical principles.

Billington's book is a highly readable compendium of almost 200 reviews and other articles on theatre written between 1971, when Billington began his *Guardian* career, and 1991. While reviews comprise the bulk of these pieces, a number of articles, as well as reviews of subjects somewhat beyond the ken of the average reviewer, make it clear that Billington's perspectives range far beyond the overnight review and its primary audience.

Billington's coverage ranges from the Royal Shakespeare Company's epic *The Greeks* to the latest restaging of *And Then There Were None*; from a rave for Andrew Lloyd Webber's commercially successful *Cats* to a pan for Webber's commercially successful *Starlight Express*; from enthusiasm for Stephen Sondheim's *Follies* before it closed early to seemingly appropriate trashing of such musical bombs as Webber's collaboration with Alan Ayckbourn on the "witless travesty" of *Jeeves*, and Sir Peter Hall's "savourless" *Jean Seberg*.

Billington's reviews will probably be most useful for many as a chronicle of a period of great British playwriting activity. Indeed, Billington believes "[t]he greatest challenge to a critic is responding to new writing," and salts the volume liberally with reviews of such work. Playwrights who debuted in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s who continued to write actively and to be revived in the '70s and '80s included Samuel Beckett, Edward Bond, Peter Nichols, John Osborne, Harold Pinter, Peter Shaffer, Tom Stoppard and David Storey. Billington's reviews of their work observe their continued growth, as when he "find[s] it difficult to write to calm, measured tones about Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*: a dazzling

pyrotechnical feat that combines Wildean pastiche, political history, artistic debate, spoof-reminiscence, and song-and-dance in marvelous judicious proportions. . . . a dense Joycean web of literary allusions [which] also radiates sheer intellectual joie de vivre. . . .” He also comments on what he perceives as their slips, such as his opinion that Pinter’s *Betrayal* “betrayed his immense talent.” (Incidentally, Billington graciously and honestly notes in his introduction that he now feels this review, among others, was a “brutal put-down” which exemplifies the problem with “one night stands”: “that things often look different by the sober light of dawn.”)

Billington also has served his critical watch during the emergence of Ayckbourn, Howard Barker, Bennett, Alan Brenton, Caryl Churchill, David Edgar, Michael Frayn, Trevor Griffiths, Christopher Hampton, David Hare and Hanif Kureishi. While adding much to the critical literature on all of these writers, Billington reserves particular admiration for Ayckbourn’s “remarkable . . . savage tragi-comedy” and his “great gift [of] express[ing ideas] visually” in such works as *Woman in Mind* and *Henceforward*; and for Hare’s “muscle and grip,” “cool irony,” and “moral fervour and campaigning theatricality” with which he is “chasing, with such stylish anger, after the big public issues” in such works as *Fanshen* and *Murmuring Judges*.

Thankfully, Billington’s reviews do not simply address issues of writing. He usually suggests what he sees as a play’s major questions or issues, and then considers whether the various aspects of production support or undercut these questions. He is careful to write about leading and important supporting performances; musical performance; directing; and aspects of scenic, costume, lighting, and sound design with consistency. As might be expected, the subject he considers in greatest depth, after writing, is acting: the careers and performance attributes of Simon Callow, Judi Dench, Albert Finney, Anthony Hopkins, Ian McKellen, Emma Thompson and John Wood. Billington often sharply describes specific visual, kinetic and aural aspects of moments of acting. For example, David Threlfall’s turn as Gregers Werle in Peter Hall’s 1990 *Wild Duck* “looks like an El Greco Christ in urgent need of psychiatric attention: everything he does has a terrifyingly quiet intensity, not least the obsessive way he quizzes Hedvig about the wild duck. . . .” Or Anthony Hopkins in *Antony and Cleopatra*, who “externalizes the conflict in Antony between the soldier and the lover: when recalled to Rome he prowls the stage hungrily like a lion waiting to get back in the arena.” Or Kate Nelligan in Hare’s *Plenty*, who “can combine a waspish irony (extending the vowel sounds mercilessly when she tells the British ambassador . . . that her late husband, Tony, was a doctor) with a raging self-disgust.”

Billington's commentary on acting and theatre in general isn't limited to reviews. Articles often focus on the work of specific actors, playwrights, and directors, or on the state of acting and playwriting in Britain. He adds much to his readers' sense of social context with these articles and with articles on such issues of social and theatrical interest as the need for theatrical leadership and experimentation, cross-cultural casting and the state of the national subsidies for theatre. The history of perilous waning of such support in the Thatcher years—which, in Billington's words, “bred a siege-mentality, excessive prudence and the sanctification of the box-office as the ultimate arbiter”—becomes an important and even essential thread in Billington's record. And he documents his own attempts to learn more about the theatre's view of itself by participating in discussions, forums, attending rehearsals and even directing a Marivaux one-act at the Barbican—which RSC then-artistic director Terry Hands reviews critically but fairly. (Besides Hands, other writers appear as well: such folk as Osborne, Hall and Kureishi respond, often in opposition, to Billington's reviews and articles).

While Billington's main responsibility is covering London's commercial and subsidized theatres, the reviewer is aware that his audience is likely to consider other entertainment options—options which he admits to enjoying as well. And so we can read his serious and simultaneously wry analysis of Bob Hope, Jack Benny, Shirley MacLaine, Liberace, Barry Humphries as Dame Edna Everage, and British comics Ken Dodd, Max Wall and Ken Campbell. Billington also incisively covers other unique theatricals, such as a Christmas panto, a didactic environmental play which promenades through the Royal Kew Gardens and a private performance of Virginia Woolf's *Freshwater*, featuring a performance by Eugene Ionesco.

Although the collection understandably focuses on English theatre, Billington values the importance of an international theatrical perspective. Accordingly, he often argues for English importation of world drama and theatrical companies, and regularly reports on performances abroad, in Paris, New York, Niagara-on-the Lake, Berlin, Moscow and Tokyo, among others. Thus he introduces and exposes his audience to Peter Brook's work at the Théâtre Bouffes du Nord, Dustin Hoffman's Willy Loman, the Shaw Festival, the Chekhovian and Shakespearean stagings of Peter Stein, the *Hamlet* of Yuri Lyubimov's Taganka Theatre and the ritualized conventions of the kabuki's *onnagata*. Billington uses these observations to make effective comparisons between the respective states of theatre abroad and at home. For example, how translation of Shakespeare into various languages loses some of the precise beauties of language but frees the metaphorical aspects of the Bard.

Of special interest to many will be Billington's coverage of Shakespearean revivals. These were most useful for me when I was able to compare productions across the years. Especially enlightening, for example, were three *Macbeth* reviews: the "throat-grabbing power" of Ian McKellen and Trevor Nunn's 1976 production; the "subtle as a battering ram. . . . monotonous tenor bark" of Peter O'Toole's disastrous 1980 Old Vic Scottish play; and the National's 1987 imported and "achingly beautiful" staging by Yukio Ninagawa. Billington's coverage of Shakespearean stagings such as *Julius Caesar* or the English history plays suggest that the evolution of such staging rather neatly reflects the contemporary conditions of class conflict, generational divisions, and shifts in the political landscape in England, and perhaps elsewhere.

Through all this, Billington clearly expresses and adheres to his principles of criticism. He states that "we should all have a Platonic ideal of the perfect theatre for which we should passionately fight." His ideal prefers plays which "link the private and public worlds, since people are a product of both their psychology and their social environment"; which "offer a complicated, deeply felt response to life rather than a series of received ideas"; that marry "rich language and powerful images": that provide "instruction in how to live rather than a demonstration of spiritual negativism." These themes, as well as Billington's belief that the critic's "first duty is to engage with the living event with total concentration and to present his or her uncensored reactions with maximum dash and fire," run through his reviews. In fact, other than a slightly bothersome overuse of the word "astonishing" as a positive description, Billington's critical work follows these principles uniformly, so much so that social and artistic contexts are equally clear. In so doing, he brings credit to the theatre and to his profession, and provides herein a document which would be a worthy choice for the library of anyone interested in the contemporary British theatre.

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Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama. Una Chaudhuri. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995. xv + 310. ISBN 0-472-09589-7. \$37.50.

One of the first things that comes to mind upon encountering Una Chaudhuri's *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* is a question: Why hasn't anyone written a study like this already? The issues of place, placedness, home and exile are so germane, not only to modern plays but to the

theater process itself, that it seems an obvious handle for getting a grip on the construct of “modern drama.” That’s not to say this book is either unnecessary or unsurprising. The reader willing to join Chaudhuri on her journey will be confronted with some of the old standbys of modern drama studies, but regrouped, reread and reinserted into a more capacious canon of plays, they will be made invigoratingly strange.

Chaudhuri’s study hinges on the idea she calls “geopathology”: a formation common to much late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century drama that fixes individual identity to a concept of place, and poses place as a problem—in fact, as *the* problem. Geopathology is intimately related to naturalism’s domestic interiors, and turns on action based on the comings, goings and stayings of characters. Typically, home is a double-sided construct: both alluring as what the author calls (in several places) a “stable container for identity,” and oppressive in that it prevents the self-realization made possible by freedom from boundaries and pasts, it usually must be rejected in the “heroism of departure” (xii).

The idea of “geopathology,” if not the term, has been in use among Americanist literary critics: much work has focussed on traditions of leavetaking and vexed relations to the idea of home in the American novel. But the constellation is even more relevant to the dramatic text, where negotiations with space are not only the theme of the text: they *are* the text. The particularity of the obsession with place in drama is expressed by Chaudhuri as naturalism’s “logic of total visibility” (26). The mode of naturalistic theater production is shown to stage the enforced relationship between place and meaning: the characters and the environment interpenetrate one another, combining to create a semiotic puzzle for the audience to unravel.

As a demonstration of the logic of total visibility, Chaudhuri begins her study with a reading of Strindberg’s *Miss Julie*. Beginning with this typical starting point for studies of modern drama sets up the ways in which Chaudhuri’s text is reading both with and against the grain of reigning constructions of “modern drama.” Gliding smoothly between Strindberg’s text and sixties experimental theaters, Chaudhuri posits naturalism and “environmental theater” as false opposites, linked by their promise of a visible overflow of meaning that neither can deliver. Her discussion of what Walter Kerr titles “participatory theater” is particularly incisive. As a more self-conscious staging of the limits of representation, the author adds a discussion of Jim Cartwright’s *Road* to the chapter.

Such unusual groupings mark this original study. Looking through the lens of location and placedness, new lines of intertextuality emerge, drawing in both canonical and non-canonical modern plays. Ibsen’s *Nora* pairs up with

Synge's *Playboy*; Shepard's American misfits literalize Albee; David Henry Hwang is the inheritor of Beckett's minimalism. The most persistent and forceful cross-references are those between American plays: Chaudhuri convincingly argues, for instance, that O'Neill's Tyrones lurk behind all subsequent American stage families.

The thematic link of place gives rise to new recurring figures and tropes as well. Chaudhuri weaves discussions of addiction, photography and performance into the outline of geopathology: if place is the problem, addiction and performance are common responses. And photography, caught up as it is in postmodern critiques of representation as a devaluation of the real, becomes both a gamut for recovering place and home and a contributor to their inevitable loss. Other figures also recur—forests, burials, weather, food, angels—all circling around the central problem of place.

Chaudhuri is less interested in the problem, however, than in its hypothetical solutions, suggesting that in fact the history of responses to geopathology constitutes one history of modern drama. As a result, *Staging Place* focusses on the contemporary end of modern drama. After mid-century, the author argues, real dislocations and immigrations on a mass scale result in a new drama that "taking social instability as its basic norm, traces the difficulty of constituting identities on the slippery ground of immigrant experience" (173). The old mechanics of self-realization through departure, or the individualist poetics of exile, just don't work in the face of diaspora and large scale immigrations.

Responses to this state of affairs vary, in both style and effectiveness. The drama of failed homecoming, exemplified by Shepard and Pinter, disrupts the promise of hidden (and subsequently revealed) truth implied by naturalism's hermeneutic. Stephen Poliakoff's *Coming in to Land* uses real dislocation only as an object lesson for its English protagonist, resulting in what Chaudhuri calls "an updated version of geopathology" (196). On the other hand, Janusz Glowacki's *Hunting Cockroaches* wryly demonstrates that, given the overwhelming universal condition of homelessness, geographic dislocation will never provide pat self-revelations.

Hope for the future, as Chaudhuri sees it, lies in a new "more multiply-situated model of subjectivity" (210)—an identity that can be forged not through lone departure, a rejection of home, or even homecoming, but by an acceptance of homelessness that allows the individual's relations with place to be multiple and endlessly negotiated. Bilingualism, discussed with reference to Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest*, Maria Irene Fornes's *The Danube* and José Rivera's *The House of Ramon Iglesia*, is interpreted as one sign of this hope.

As its excitement is focussed on the more contemporary plays—and the ways in which they rewrite our readings of the established canon—so too *Staging Place* becomes increasingly focussed on questions of Americanness. The myth of America as a “placeless” place, which Chaudhuri follows several of her playwrights in rejecting, is replaced by the construction of America as the possible site of multiple places, inhabited by multiple communities. But this does not reflect an authorial investment in the old figure of America as the world’s most essential social experiment, but rather a conviction that America might belatedly accept an awareness of difference—not without its own difficulties—that has always been available elsewhere. In an epilogue, Chaudhuri discusses Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America* and Suzan-Lori Parks’ *The America Play* as exemplary of a new mode of drama that rejects universal representations wholesale, insisting on all experience’s firm ties to place and situation.

This is not a simple book. Chaudhuri’s vision, informed as it is by both theatre history and postmodern theory, is completely original. The intertextual connections are so persistent that *Staging Place* simply cannot divide into the neat chapters on single playwrights so characteristic of drama studies. Like the characters she discusses, Chaudhuri is in constant motion, moving gracefully from play to play, or honing in on one only to remind us of the continual transgressions of its boundaries by other voices, other texts. The reader experiences firsthand the metaphorical homelessness that pervades this book, and the resulting destabilization is both dizzying and fertile.

Chaudhuri is, to use a distinction she engages, a traveler and not a tourist. She whisks us breathlessly from text to text not in order to impose sameness upon them, but to let us experience the unities that can arise from so much difference. Her intellectual energy is dazzling. More to her point, this book not only provides a new way of thinking about twentieth-century drama, it is a forceful argument for the centrality of the stage in addressing the issues of identity, community, and difference that currently haunt our public life.

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Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon, First Supplement: A Catalogue-Index to Productions of the Royal Shakespeare Company, 1979-1993. Michael Mullin. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994. xxvi + 352 pages. ISBN 0-313-25028-6. \$95.00.

This reference source is for the serious Shakespeare scholar interested in the actual performance aspects of the playwright's works. The title reflects an accurate assessment of Mullin's research with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Importantly, this monograph builds upon significant research previously recorded in Mullin's two volume set, *Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon: A Catalogue-Index to Productions of the Shakespeare Memorial/Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 1879-1978* published in 1980. As both the original and newer index fill a void in the world of Shakespearean reference tools, this catalogue-index is a sound investment for the scholar.

The most apparent improvement within the supplement are major changes in the physical appearance of the typeset; Mullin's original catalogue-index was assembled by a computer readout. The newer source is much more accessible for ease in sorting information quickly and accurately.

The contents of the catalogue-index includes a preface that recounts the beginnings of this project that is bound to create empathy from any researcher. In the spring of 1976, 93 reels of microfilms from the Shakespeare Centre Library from Stratford-upon-Avon arrived at the University of Illinois Library for Mullin to catalogue and index information. Today, Mullin's results allow scholars from everywhere to access the production archives using the catalogue-index without traveling to Stratford-upon-Avon.

Mullin notes opportunities for research using the archives and the catalogue-index, stating that from its beginnings on the periphery, "theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon or from Stratford-upon-Avon has moved to the center of theatre production in England and in the world" (xxv). The nature of the catalogue-index supports the importance of the RSC's production record and the experience as recorded in the Shakespeare Centre archives. The archives reveal that, "Whatever the variables of casting, design, acting, space, and audience, there are constants in blocking and dynamics to be discovered in the promptbooks" (xxv). Therefore, the monograph is intended to help directors, designers, and actors find the parallels to their own situations; they will be interested to see how others dealt with problems in staging or acting and what the reviewers made of the results (xxv). Mullin notes that it is common for directors at the Royal Shakespeare Company to consult these archives and that other theatre professionals may find it useful to use this catalogue-index and originals or microform copies of the Shakespeare Centre archives.

Mullin's introduction includes brief summaries of principal directors that influenced twelve decades of theatrical production at Stratford-upon-Avon. The directors span from Frank Benson (1886-1919) through the present artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Adrian Noble (1991-).

The main body of the resource includes a catalogue of productions that contains information as to the theatre space, press night, closing night, authorial information, production or director name, actors and a listing of reviews. After the information cataloguing the productions, Mullin includes more specific indexing that includes the following: a calendar of productions by opening date; an index to playwrights, translators and adapters; an index to directors, designers, light designers and other production personnel; an index to actors; and an index to reviewers. All of the listings are quite logical and accessible.

It is imperative that the researcher realize that there are no listings of scenographic or iconographic records within *Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon, First Supplement*. However, Mullin's newest monograph, *Design by Motley*, should rectify this need and mesh with the catalogue-index.

Mullin's hope is that study of these productions will bring today's audiences closer to the vast experience embodied in the Stratford production record. What he provides to the researcher is well documented results from what scholars and critics often consider "experiments in staging under differing conditions of performance" (xxvi). It is the recording or cataloguing of this documentation by Mullin that gives the researcher and serious artist a reference tool unlike any other.

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Meyerhold. A Revolution in Theatre. Edward Braun. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1995. ISBN 0-87745-514-7.

Upon his return home from a trip to Russia, modern theatre's eccentric visionary Edward Gordon Craig referred to Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940) as an "exceptional theatric genius." Such praise from an admired contemporary may well have pleased Meyerhold, whose nearly forty years of prolific stage production ended abruptly only a few years after Craig's visit. In the wake of newly available material about Meyerhold's tragic torture and death at the hands of Stalin, as well as burgeoning scholarship in English on Meyerhold (and the golden era of Russian theatre his career exactly parallels), Edward Braun offers an exceptional examination of Meyerhold's life and work. He brings into clearer focus a director/actor whose work holds riches of inspiration and fascination to both theatre practitioners and the uninitiated. Braun is well-acquainted with Meyerhold's theatrical output. In the early 1970's, he edited *Meyerhold on*

Theatre, the first important collection of Meyerhold's writings published in English. There have been several studies of Meyerhold in English, the best including Marjorie Hoover's *Meyerhold. The Art of Conscious Theatre* (University of Massachusetts, 1974), Robert Leach's *Vsevolod Meyerhold* (Cambridge University Press, 1989) and Konstantin Rudnitsky's towering *Meyerhold the Director* (UMI, 1981). Braun's *Meyerhold. A Revolution in Theatre*, however, has surpassed all previous works, at least partly as a result of the newly available information that has slowly made its way out of the former Soviet Union, but more for Braun's excellent scholarship and straightforward, jargon-free prose.

Meyerhold. A Revolution in Theatre spans Meyerhold's entire life, revisiting much familiar ground from his earliest days as a provincial actor and with the Moscow Art Theatre through his years as the leading theatricalist of the pre-Revolutionary Russian stage. It is Braun's treatment of Meyerhold's career after Red October, however, that is most revealing and impressive. Meyerhold's remarkable development as an artist is illuminated more clearly than ever before, providing a vision of his style and process that is impressive in its depth and scope. Braun scrupulously unfolds details about Meyerhold's conceptualizing of his productions, rehearsal and casting problems, financial constraints, and critical response which have not been readily available elsewhere. More importantly, Braun places Meyerhold's productions into the socio-political conditions that would eventually entrap and destroy him. Most compelling are Braun's last chapters on Meyerhold's final years—laced with details about Meyerhold's arrest, torture and imprisonment, and death at Stalin's behest not previously known or explored. Meyerhold's unique and brilliant imagination, his singular illumination of both classic and contemporary dramatic texts, and his success in "both the literal, architectonic sense and in the more elusive sense of infiltrating the audience's hidden emotions: its guilt, its fears, its appetites, its desires" (312) along with his ability to frequently elude censors by "evading the categories in which orthodoxy sought to confine" (312) his visions may partly explain both his genius as a director and his ultimate tragic fate.

The volume includes numerous excellent illustrations—many previously unpublished—although the quality of reproduction is often poor. Some illustrations, particularly drawings, turn out reasonably well in black-and-white, but some of the photographs are reduced to dark blobs of black ink. Many of the set renderings deserve reproduction in color, but there are no color illustrations included in this text. The reader may wish to refer to Konstantin Rudnitsky's essential *Russian and Soviet Theatre, 1905-1935* to see at least some of the renderings in splendid color and detail.

Aside from these quibbles about the quality of illustrations, this is an extremely welcome and valuable volume that will be central in the continued discussion and study of the artist Pavel Markov described vividly as a “director-poet.”

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Drag: A History of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts. Roger Baker. New York: New York University Press, 1994. Si+284+illus. ISBN 0-8147-1254-1. \$15.95.

Drag Diaries. Catherine Chermayeff, Jonathan David and Nan Richardson. New York: Umbra Editions, 1995. 128+illus. ISBN 0-8118-0895-5. \$17.95.

In a recent article on the current wave of “rampant cross-dressing” in the theater, Laurence Senelick rhetorically threw up his hands and asked: “Doesn’t anyone have a gender anymore?” In the present moment this seems like a fair enough question. Drag has become ubiquitous—a point that is amply attested to by the popular magazine racks and the movie and video screens. In fact, drag has become one of the few sites in contemporary culture where the boundary between the fringe and the mainstream has exhibited any real permeability. It may be to the dismay of some of the East Village faithful, but *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and *To Wong Foo* have brought at least some of drag’s essential nuttiness and self-referentiality into the shopping-mall and cineplex culture.

It should come as no surprise that cultural historians, performance theorists and editors have been hard on the (high) heels of the popularization of drag. Some noteworthy theoretical and historical work on cross-gendered representation has appeared recently—including worthwhile books by Laura Levine and Michael Shapiro. But what is still needed is a reasonably comprehensive, well-documented history of cross dressing-as-performance. It may be that Senelick’s own forthcoming *The Changing Room* will fill the need. In any event, it is certain that this revised edition of Roger Baker’s *Drag* does not.

Baker’s books is actually more interesting for its editorial history than its content. The book originally appeared in 1968 as *Drag: A History of Female Impersonation of the Stage*. Baker’s death in 1993 interrupted his revisions, which have been completed for the present edition by Peter Burton and Richard

Smith. Baker's introduction to this new edition is worth attention because it captures an interesting moment in the emergence of gay culture. It must be remembered that the original edition of *Drag* was published only a year after the passage of the Sexual Offences Act, which decriminalized at least some homosexual activities in Britain. As Baker candidly recounts here, he felt compelled to finesse the involvement of drag in gay culture, in part because of the *Zeitgeist* and in part because of his own priggish "unwillingness to confront the homosexual connection" (9). We may tend in retrospect to think of the climate of the late 1960s as creatively and sexually liberated, but it certainly had a chilling effect on this book.

But while Baker's introduction has some documentary interest, the rest of *Drag* is very disappointing. Aside from a short section that provides some useful insight into the role of shifting class consciousness as a factor in the downfall of the pantomime dame, and another that provides background on variety revues like "Misleading Ladies," most of the book's content is derivative and poorly documented. It is in fact puzzling that a leading university press would publish a book that is so thoroughly uniformed by theory and unsupported by scholarship. To cite one example, it is remarkable that any editor would allow the text to persist in the notion that the Elizabethan boy actresses "rel[ie]d on no collusion with the audience, but [were] accepted precisely for what they were playing" (59). This is an idea that has been torpedoed again and again since Jan Kott first called it into question in 1964. The book's absurdities fully reveal themselves as Baker's wobbly terminology leads him into a number of strange assertions—the most astonishing of which is that the Maria of the Towneley *Secunda Pastorum* is sort of "sacred drag queen" (29). Perhaps we should at least be grateful that Baker did not refer to the character as "Mary, the *Drag Queen of Heaven*." The net result of all this is a book that is an endurance test.

By contrast, *Drag Diaries* has a vitality and immediacy that make it a genuine document of drag culture and an important resource for anyone interested in the nascence of Lypsinka, Bloodlips, the Mathu and Zaldy scene and the Wigstock phenomenon. Appropriately, it's a drag queen of a book—outsized, garish, confrontational, self-parodic. The savvy editorial decision in this case was to simply let the queens tell their stories. And it would be an understatement to say that here are some folks who like to talk about themselves. The text quickly takes on the character of a verbal mirror; the monologues themselves become a kind of verbal preening.

Given the dreary cultural critiques that have been served up by some university presses and serious journals in recent years, *Drag Diaries* is also a timely reminder that insight doesn't need to be divorced from wit. Evidence Mathu Anderson: "[Drag] is centered in the power of the icon, and in people's

need for images, strong images . . . Drag is like sitting in a Sherman tank. It has power, and you're driving. . . ." (71). Or Quentin Crisp: "For me, the movies were the genesis of drag. All movies were built on the idea that it would be possible to rule the world through the skillful use of cosmetics" (88). This is a book that is a performance in itself.

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Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness. Essays, A Play, Two Poems and A Prayer. Tony Kushner. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995. ISBN 1-55936-100-X. \$13.95 (pbk).

As gay activist playwright Larry Kramer has noted, Tony Kushner, the author of the highly acclaimed *Angels in America* plays (*Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*), is "drunk on ideas, on language, on the possibility of changing the world." Few contemporary dramatists have captured the attention of as large an audience as Kushner has with these plays. Kushner enthusiasts (and I confess to being one) await his newest plays and essays hoping that he will continue to deliver on the great promise of his first works.

Happily, Kushner's newest published work, which includes *Slavs!*, a "coda" play to *Angels*, seven pithy essays, two poems and a prayer, is another valuable contribution to the documents of political theatre. The strong sense of Greek fatality present in *Angels*, mixed with the Ibsenite notion that humanity is on the wrong road and that the souls of the past and future will demand retribution, is vividly alive in *Slavs!* The play features the old Bolshevik from *Perestroika*, as well as a mute child dying from the effects of Chernobyl, a lesbian guard at the laboratory housing the brains of the great thinkers of the Soviet era, and some old babushkas and apparatchiks attached to the Politburo. *Slavs!* is similar to *Angels* in the astonishingly fresh presentation of its author's lessons about our immediate past and present on both the personal and the historical level. It continues the Kushner tradition of raising significant questions about the passing of old values in a time of moral, political, racial and sexual division.

Of greater importance to the appreciation of Kushner's art—and political theatre in general—are the essays included in this volume. In "On Pretentiousness," Kushner amusingly and insightfully discusses his method of play-making, comparing it to the preparation of his mother's many-layered

lasagna. "American Things" provides an intellectual autobiography of Kushner, sketching in the events of the last forty years of political and social history in America that have influenced his thinking, and "With a Little Help From My Friends" provides Kushner's expression of gratitude to the numerous individuals he credits with guiding him to the completion of the two *Angels* plays (this piece was previously published as an article in the *New York Times* during the Broadway run of *Angels*).

Other essays in *Thinking About the Longstanding Problems* deal directly with gay-related issues, from Kushner's often comic assessment of the gay theories of Bruce Bawer and Andrew Sullivan to an exploration of what it means to be "tolerated." All feature Kushner's trademark mix of the hilarious and the tragic, and his two poems and a touching prayer he delivered on the Episcopal National Day of Prayer for AIDS in 1994, remind the reader of his compassion. Those who love theatre must be grateful for the intellect, wit, and most importantly, the love of humanity of the author of this volume.

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